

BOTTLE

**CAROL
DAVIS**

The bottle of Parisian air sold for \$80,000.
In Beijing he displayed it on a shelf as art, sticker still
attached like the lingering red after a slap to the cheek, held it
high on a street as a silent protest to the city's grey air, thick with
particulates.

What if he uncorked the bottle?
Would the air hiss and slither, curling upward
like leisurely smoke from the night's last cigarette?
Or disperse like a man who gives the slip to the detective tracking him?

How do objects store memories?
A trick to ensure the next generation keeps the chipped teapot,
the figurine with the missing foot?
Is there a compartment like the tiny box on a poison ring,

that reassures by its very existence?
I am envious of absolute faith, the certainty that dropping coins into a
charity box
results in the elevation of the soul.
When my father died, his pacemaker kept trilling for a minute.

Was it to allow the soul to untether from the body?

I raised my eyes to the hospital ceiling to see if I could catch it drifting,
then lowered my ear to his chest to check for beats.

My friend collects perfume bottles: an apple, a castle, a woman's curved torso.

If she opens the right one she'll be wrapped in midnight chiffon, a New Year's
Eve party, circa 1900.